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III.—*Journey through Arabia Petræa to Mount Sinai, and the excavated City of Petra, the Edom of the Prophecies.* By M. Léon de Laborde. London, 1836. 8vo. pp. 331.

THAT portion of Asia commonly known by the name of Arabia Petræa—the Idumæa of former ages, and the Edom of prophecy—possesses a deeper interest on account of the historical and religious associations which cling to it, than even on account of its extraordinary natural conformation. The work of M. de Laborde is yet another testimony to the literal fulfilment of that remarkable prophecy delivered nearly five-and-twenty centuries ago—“Edom shall be a desolation.”

But such is not our province—be it our task, in giving a brief analysis of the volumes before us, to point attention more particularly to those parts which have not been before described by the various authors who have written on this country, from the time of Peter von Suchen and Frescobaldi, in the fourteenth century, down to Niebuhr, Volney, Seetzen, Burckhardt, Irby, Mangles, and Henniker.

M. Léon de Laborde, the son of one of our distinguished Honorary Members, Count Alexandre de Laborde, well known by his sumptuous and valuable works on Spain, Austria, &c., with his travelling companion M. Linant, left Cairo on the 25th of February, 1828, and the object of his journey may be given in his own words:—

“To look for a fragment of stone in the northern part of the isthmus of Suez, where we entertained a hope of finding the Persepolitan monument mentioned by the Egyptian Commission; to visit Suez, the wells of Moses, the baths of Pharoah, and Sarbout el Cadem; to halt among the tribe of Oualed Said; to proceed to Akaba, passing by the north of Sinai; to send for the Alaouin chiefs; to penetrate to Wady Mousa; to remain there as long as possible; to return by a different route to Sinai; to pass through Ras Mohammed, Tor, Wady Faran, the convents of Serbal, Wady Mokatteb, and then return by Suez to Egypt.”—p. 49.

From Cairo the travellers crossed the desert to Suez, and following the eastern of the two Wadies which extend in a N. W. direction from Mount Sinai, they reached Wady el Mokatteb, remarkable for its Sinaitic inscriptions there, Sarbont el Cadem, and examined the celebrated monuments, tombs, &c., which M. de Laborde thinks are certainly Egyptian; thence they descended towards the Elanitic gulf, by the great Wady Zackal. On emerging from the Wady Cheick, the traveller perceives Mount Sinai, o’ertopped by Mount St. Catherine, both at this season capped with snow. The Wady Zackal is the wilderness of Sinai, which leads by a continued declivity in an easterly direction to the coast of the Red Sea, and is thus described:—

"The route on which we now entered was the most singular that the imagination can picture. The valley, shut in within a width of about fifty paces by masses of granite, of from a thousand to twelve hundred feet in height, which often rose like perpendicular walls even to their very tops, exhibited the appearance of a Cyclopean street, the ravines branching out from which, on each side, seemed to be adjoining streets, all belonging to some ancient and abandoned town. The extraordinary shapes and immensity of the masses accumulated on the right and left were calculated to terrify, and almost overwhelm the mind; an effect which was not a little augmented by the enormous fissures that occurred here and there, presenting huge fragments which had tumbled from the summit of the mountain. The silence prevailing all around us was that of the grave: the wind was unheard amidst these almost subterraneous passages, the sun touched with its golden hue only the most elevated points, and the tranquillity of the place would have been undisturbed, had not every step and every sound of our voices been re-echoed from the steeps on each side as we pursued our way."—p. 89.

From Dahab, the Midian of Jethro, or the Elanitic gulf, they continued their journey to the north-east as far as Akaba, at the head of the gulf, where they met the Alaouin chiefs, and arranged with them to be conducted safely to Petra. Their route led in a N.N.E. direction for sixty miles, along the Wady Araba, the plain of Ezion Gaber; as they approach their destination M. de Laborde says,

"We wound round a peak, surmounted by a single tree. The view from that point exhibited a vast frightful desert—a chaotic sea, the waves of which were petrified. Following the beaten road, we saw before us Mount Hor, crowned by the tomb of the prophet, if we are to credit the ancient traditions preserved by the people of that country. Several large and ruinous excavations, which are seen in the way, may arrest the attention of a traveller who is interested by such objects, and has no notion of those still concealed from his view by the curtain of rocks which extends before him. But at length the road leads him to the heights above one more ravine, whence he discovers within his horizon the most singular spectacle, the most enchanting picture, which nature has wrought in her grandest mood of creation, which men influenced by the vainest dreams of ambition have yet bequeathed to the generations that were to follow them. At Palmyra nature renders the works of man insignificant by her own immensity and boundless horizon, within which some hundreds of columns seem entirely lost; here, on the contrary, she appears delighted to set in her own noble frame-work his productions, which aspire, and not unsuccessfully, to harmonise with her own majestic yet fantastic appearance. The spectator hesitates for a moment as to which of the two he is the more to admire—whether he is to accord the preference to nature, who invites his attention to her matchless girdle of rocks, wondrous as well for their colour as their forms, or to the men who

feared not to intermingle the works of their genius with such splendid efforts of creative power"—p. 147.

The vast necropolis of Petra is before us.

Burckhardt was the first who, in later days, attempted to visit the remains of Petra. He entered by a ravine to the south-east, and had gone some distance when his guide refused to proceed any further. Captains Irby and Mangles, and Messrs. Banks and Legh, were the next who succeeded in effecting an entrance by the same pass as Burckhardt; but they, too, after having spent part of two days among the ruins, were obliged by the fears of their guides to abandon the spot. Messrs. Strangways and Anson also visited the valley, but an account, we believe, was not published. M. de Laborde has been more fortunate; he entered at the south-western angle of the city, and was enabled to remain eight days, during which he and his companion thoroughly examined and sketched this remarkable city. Many of the monuments had been before described, but one on the north side, called El Deir, or the Convent, the most distinguished by its size and beauty of workmanship, was never before visited. M. de Laborde says,

"This astonishing work of art exhibits a compact mass, a monolithic monument, in fact, of enormous dimensions, by way of ornament in front of the mountain. Its preservation is perfect; it would be difficult to say as much for its style. The vastness of its dimensions, however, compensate in some degree for its defects; and even the fantastic character which it presents is curious with reference to the history of the arts, when compared with the different edifices which were constructed about the time of their revival. It forms a link between their decline in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and their restoration in the fifteenth.

"While I was copying this grand architectural production, M. Linant took its measurements; we then examined its environs. In front of it there is a lofty rock, to which an artificial ascent is formed; we found on the top, on a level platform, a line of columns, the bases of which are still in their places, and a subterranean chamber, at the bottom of which there is a niche, sculptured with great care, though in an extremely defective style. From this platform we enjoyed a most extensive view; the eye commanding, on one side, the monument of El Deir and the valley of Mousa, and on the other, the chaos of rocks which are piled at the foot of Mount Hor."—p. 182.

Our traveller returned from Petra to Akaba, by crossing part of the mountain range which forms the eastern boundary of the Wady Araba, and descending the Wady Jetoum. On the route many ruins were found—remains of an ancient road—and traces of former civilization; indicating clearly that this now deserted and desolate country was formerly fruitful and populous. From Akaba, M. de Laborde retraced his steps to the south-west,

visited the small port of Tor on the east coast of the Gulf of Suez, and then Ras Mohammed, the southern extreme point of separation between the two gulfs. He afterwards ascended to the Convent of St. Catharine, Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai.

"Our course towards the summit of Sinai lay through a ravine to the south-west. The monks had arranged a series of large slabs in tolerably regular order, which once formed a convenient staircase to the top of the mountain. The rains, however, have disturbed them, and, as no repairs had been for a long time attended to, the stairs were in many places in ruins. Just before reaching the foot of Sinai, immediately after quitting Horeb, the traveller sees a door built in the form of an arch; on the key-stone of the arch a cross has been carved.

"We climbed with difficulty to the top of Sinai, resting at each cleft or salient part of the rock to which some traditions have been annexed by the inventive faculty of the monks, who have communicated them to the Arabs, always ready to listen to narratives of this description. Arrived on the summit, I was surprized by the briskness of the air. The eye sought in vain to catch some prominent object amid the chaos of rocks which were tumbled round the base, and vanished in the distance in the form of raging waves. Nevertheless, I distinguished the Red Sea, the mountains of Africa, and some summits of mountains which I easily recognised by their shapes.—Schommar being distinguishable by its rounded masses, Serbal by its shooting points, and Tih by its immense prolongation."—p. 240-41.

This volume is illustrated by various admirable sketches by M. de Laborde, and also by a plan of Petra, and a map respectable in its details—but erroneous in its positions. As it is mentioned that the travellers were well provided with instruments, we have searched for some little addition to our stock of geographical knowledge—as positions of places, heights of mountains, &c.—but we have not found them.

IV.—*Reise in Chile, Peru, und auf dem Amazonenstrome während der Jahre 1827-32. Von E. Poeppig.* (Travels in Chile, Peru, and on the Amazon River, in the years 1827-32. By E. Poeppig, Professor at the University of Leipzig. 2 vols. 4to.

It is remarkable that, during the short space of seven years, from 1828 to 1835, not less than three European travellers have crossed the whole breadth of South America, from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, descending the mighty stream of the Amazons, first explored by the intrepid Orellana, just three centuries ago; viz., Lieut. Mawe, R.N., in 1828; Dr. Poeppig, in 1831; and Lieut. Smyth, R.N., in 1834. The narratives of two of these expeditions are well known: the work of the eminent German naturalist